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O F T H E
D E P L O R A B L E S T A T E
O F T H E
I S L A N D O F M I N O R C A ,

And of the
Many INJURIES done to the Inhabitants
Under the Command of
Lieutenant-Governor JOHNSTON.



L O N D O N :

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AN ACCOUNT OF MINORCA.

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T is necessary to premise that on the 17th of October 1708, General Stanhope took possession of the island of Minorca; in the name of our ally Charles the Third of Spain, and after giving the natives thanks for their zeal and assistance in taking it from the French, the said General did in King Charles the Third's name ratify and confirm all the privileges they had enjoyed till the death of Charles the Second of Spain; and the island being afterwards yielded to the English, the Duke of Argyle plenipotentiary of Queen Ann did in her Majesty's name confirm all their cus-

toms and privileges both civil and ecclesiastical on the same footing they had ever before enjoyed them, with this particular declaration that the *Minorquins* should never have any reason to doubt of any promise made by her Majesty.

Among other things he promised in the Queen's name that barracks should be built for the troops in less than a year's time, and that sea-coal should be sent from *England* for their use, adding that by this means the island would be freed from their heavy contributions ; but the not performing these two articles obliged the inhabitants to supply the troops with lodging and fire out of the public stock, as well as oil, water and hay : and also to provide men and horses for the marching regiments, &c. without payment or receiving any satisfaction for the same, except for the hay which the officers paid, though less than its value ; these were deemed

deemed by the *Minorquins* to be severe contributions and great grievances.

In 1752, after the island had been burdened with these heavy expences for upwards of forty years, complaints had been for several years presented against Lieutenant-Governor *Anstruther*, the then commanding officer, for the great oppressions laid upon the inhabitants; the natives obtained some favourable orders from his Majesty and Council which spread a universal joy over all the island; and thereby the governors were restrained from seizing any part of the duty arising from the *Estantue* on *Brandy*, and it was confirmed for its former use and purpose; and by these orders they were delivered from a severe subjection to the military forces.

After *Anstruther's* necessary resignation, General *Blakeney* was appointed governor, and was not a little chagrined at these
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new orders, and exercised great severities on the inhabitants; *Mabon*, which bore the charges of the agency, felt the cruel effects of the Governor's displeasure; for advocates, judges, and secretaries, were there suspended, and at once stript of their places and honours, which they had many years enjoyed by virtue of *British* royal grants: and his resentment was carried so far, that he sent privately wrong informations to the court of *London*, and obtained under unjust pretences a sort of explanatory orders not agreeable to the privileges of the *Minorquins* which were in some respects contrary to those of 1752, and which were obtained before the *Minorquins* were heard; but no sooner had these clandestine orders reached the ears of the people, but they immediately sent two agents to *London*, whose just representations lasted till 1756, and unhappily failed of the desired effect on account of the island being invaded and taken by the *French*. The natives not being allowed

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the use of arms, could not prevent the landing of the *French*, but however they gave all possible assistance to the *English* both of money and provisions; their loyalty and affection to *Great-Britain* was unquestionably experienced both at that time and upwards of forty years before.

When the island was restored to *Great-Britain* in 1763, the natives were then in hopes of the redress of many grievances they laboured under; but Lieutenant-Governor *Johnston*, instead of alleviating them did mightily increase the weight of their burdens, and seemed by his conduct to aim chiefly at his own interest and the making of money.

In the first place he in his Majesty's name published orders directly contrary to the late treaty of peace, which brought the island into the greatest confusion and perplexity.

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The *Minorquins* applied thereupon by writing to Mr. *Johnston*, who on the 18th of November 1763, issued out a decree, which, in a great measure, was contradictory to what he had before published in the King's name; and a part of it was a confirmation of his former orders against the late treaty of peace: But other articles mentioned in the representation of the island were unnoticed and unattended to by the said Lieutenant-Governor, which was designed to render the situation of the inhabitants uncertain and perplexed, and to make the justice of their cause appear doubtful.

The *Minorquins* offered to give up the product of the *Estantue-Duty* on *Brandy*; a moiety of which belongs to them, in order that proper barracks should be built for the soldiers, though the Duke of *Argyle* plenipotentiary of Queen *Ann*, had promised that barracks should be built at her

her Majesty's expence. This appears by the establishment of this duty by Governor *Kane*, and its approbation by the royal orders in council of 1752 and 1753; but notwithstanding this just and reasonable proposal made by the *Minorquins*, it was altogether rejected by Mr. *Johnston*, who acquainted the magistrates in writing that he had no instructions, neither was it his inclination, to apply any part of this duty to the use they proposed; and he afterwards took the liberty to seize this considerable revenue for his own purposes, in violation of its first establishment and of the royal orders before-mentioned.

And what is most astonishing is, that he should affirm facts before the King and Council that are contrary to truth; for when the memorials were presented by the agent of the *Minorquins*, Mr. *Johnston* declared that he never received any money of the *Estanque-Duty*, but

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that the said money was in the hands of the collector at *Mabon*, whereas the collector has declared on oath before the commissioners appointed by the King and Council for examining witnesses, that he delivered the whole amount of this duty to the Rev. Mr. *Clarke*, secretary to Mr. *Johnston*, by his orders; for which he has the proper discharges in his possession.

Mr. *Johnston* acted in the same manner with the yearly amount of the *Anchorage-Duty* established by Governor *Kane* on foreign vessels only, for the purpose of building a lazaretto in *Mabon*, which would tend to the increase of commerce, and be for the benefit of the public: This design was also approved of by his Majesty's royal orders. Upon this charge Mr. *Johnston* answered in writing before the King and Council, that the *Anchorage-Duty* had been applied towards repairing the house for quarantain, &c. Whereas those employed in that house declar-

declared upon oath before the commissioners that no repairs had been made there, but on the contrary that a considerable quantity of stones, which the magistrates had furnished for the lazaretto, had been by Mr. *Johnston's* permission taken away by his friend *Theodore Alexiano*, a Greek, (who, though obnoxious to the people, was made captain of the port of *Mahon*, and an *English* officer greatly beloved was displaced by Mr. *Johnston* for this purpose) and appropriated to the said *Alexiano's* use to the prejudice of the public, and in disregard of the aforesaid orders.

On the 8th of *February, 1764*, Mr. *Johnston* published, by writing, in the island, that his Royal Master had been pleased to confirm all their rights and privileges, &c. but instead of altering his arbitrary proceedings he rather increased them, without any regard to his Majesty's orders; by imposing new duties, by per-

mitting monopolies, estanques and other excesses, which were expressly contrary to the King's orders; by granting passports to foreigners though they had no ships, which gave a suspicion of his having a private concern; for at the same time he denied passports to natives; and he also gives the preference to *French* merchants before the *English*, which is very prejudicial to *British* subjects.

Moreover, Mr. *Johnston* employs, in the management of the affairs of government, several persons formerly employed by the *French* government; and also he has procured royal grants for undeserving persons, particularly for one who served at *Paris* as agent against *English* privateers during the late war: Mr. *Johnston* recommended this *French* agent to the court of *London*, and by giving information that the place was vacant, obtained a commission from his Majesty for this agent to be advocate-fiscal in the island, though

though the former fiscal had been *only* suspended by Mr. Blakeney; and his suspension was without cause, as is manifest by the representations made on his behalf before his Majesty and Council, which did not come to a determination in 1756, on account of the *French* invasion. Mr. Johnston also procured the royal grant of the weight and measure of the island for a Greek, and thereby displaced a worthy man who, with his father, had enjoyed that office many years.

Mr. Johnston did also take the liberty to make some very material alterations in the customs and privileges of health, and permitted a new seal to be made use of, and an alteration in the words it formerly contained; and upon his second arrival in the island he ordered the magistrates not to interfere any longer in that tender article *the health* without his privi-
ty, and obliged them to deliver up the registers and plates; and a new seal being
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made by his order, he appointed one *Francis Segui and Syntas*, distinguished by the *French* for his attachment to their interest, to the management of this new seal, and the department of health, ordering the secretary of the magistrates to have no more concern therein. This matter being represented to his Majesty and Council, an order was made to restore to the magistrates the full management of *health*, and a royal commission was issued to examine witnesses about this affair.

The many injurious steps taken by Mr. *Johnston* produced very dreadful effects in the island : The *French* merchants were permitted to export corn and provisions during a scarcity in the island ; which brought on so great a famine that the inhabitants were in danger of being starved, and did at that time apply to his Majesty and Council for redress.

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While the complaints of the islanders were thus depending, Mr. *Johnston* was called home, and was required to make his answers to those complaints exhibited against him; but it was evident that his answers were not satisfactory; and his Majesty and Council were pleased to grant a commission to take depositions in *Minorca* about the matters complained of.

When Mr. *Johnston* left the island General *Crawford*, a gentleman of justice and honour, succeeded in the command, who immediately took the most effectual means to rectify former irregularities, and to put the island in a flourishing condition: He assured the people that he would use his interest for obtaining from the King and Council such orders as would answer that purpose; but these designs could not be executed, that good governor being removed a month after
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by death to the great lamentation of the inhabitants.

After Mr. *Crawford's* death Colonel *Townshend* arrived in the island as the commander thereof : This gentleman was greatly esteemed and beloved by all the people for his just proceedings. With the approbation of the Court and joy of the whole island he began the much-desired building of the barracks out of the yearly revenues of the *Eftanque* on *Brandy*, which, if it had been finished, would have removed a great grievance to the island.

While the complaints against Mr. *Johnston* were depending before the King and Council, royal commissions were issued out to examine witnesses at *Minorca*. He was permitted to return to the island, and it was supposed that his return would be disagreeable and prejudicial to the
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Minorquins, therefore means were used to prevent his return, but without success. After he arrived in the island, his government was not more mild than formerly, for he disobeyed the royal orders of *July 17, 1765*, for appointing depositions to be taken on both sides within six months. He made application to the court at *London*, and petitioned for an indulgence of enlarging the time for taking the depositions, which was granted; but this delay occasioned a considerable expence to the island.

Soon after Mr. *Johnston*'s arrival he ordered the building of the barracks to be discontinued, though three parts of them were finished, and about two thousand pounds expended. This stop was a great loss to the people, and a disappointment to his Majesty's soldiers, and also will be hurtful to that part of the barracks already built. He refused to pay the proprietor of the ground where the barracks are

built the yearly rent agreed for by his predecessor. He has occasioned the magistrates and people to be at unnecessary expences, and shews his resentment for their just complaints against him before the King and Council. He is now endeavouring to obtain an indulgence for the money he received on account of the *Eslanque-Duty*; but it may be justly supposed that it will appear to be an unjust and unreasonable request. And that he stopt the barracks with an expectation of making more money, and of obtaining an indulgence, is not without ground of suspicion.

IN this short account there is not room to mention many of his irregularities, in threatening magistrates, agents and deputies, particularly one of the jurats and a secretary, now dead; which secretary in particular had been much threatned by him. He also ordered the secretary of the commiffioners to be imprisoned on pretence

pretence of having, during the *French* government, forfeited his fidelity as notary; but by the several circumstances of the complaint, it appears to be out of resentment for his having taken the depositions faithfully against him. His government cannot but be very disagreeable to the *Minorquins*; for he hath shewn his resentment to persons of reverence and distinction, on points of the greatest consequence.

The many grievances the island labours under can only be redressed by the goodness and justice of his gracious Majesty, which, as faithful subjects, they humbly and earnestly wait for. A person is not fit to govern that island who seems chiefly to aim at making money. Nor can the island expect any happiness while *French* ascendancy prevails in it. But it is apprehended that the most effectual means to render it happy, would be to restore

the persons attached to the *British* crown
to their former stations.

The *Minorquins* only desire to be fairly heard, upon any representations made against them. Mr. *Johnston*, no doubt, has a right to defend himself as far as is consistent with truth and justice: And the *Minorquins* have the same right. Mr. *Johnston* has lately sent an agent from *Minorca* to the court of *London*; who, it is said, is commissioned to get Mr. *John Font*, his Majesty's assessor in *Mahon*, removed from that place, which he has enjoyed for thirty years and upwards, by virtue of *British* royal grants.

The natives and inhabitants of *Minorca* have upon all occasions discovered their affection to the *British* government, and endeavoured to support it from time to time. On the delivering up the island to the *British* crown after the late peace,

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General *Lambert* being straitned for money for the support of the soldiers, was, upon the first notice, supplied by the natives with the sum he wanted. Whenever the *British* commissaries wanted corn, the magistrates of *Mahon* supplied them with it, without the least interest: But at the time of the scarcity of corn in the island and other places, the *Minorquins* were unkindly treated; for they applied to Mr. *Johnston*, who refused to speak in their behalf to the commissary: But on their own application to him, he sold them some, but upon very hard terms.

The natives of *Minorca* are not supposed to be under an arbitrary government, for they are to be treated as a free people: Their liberties or their being a free people was promised to them in the name of her Majesty Queen *Ann*, and has been confirmed by her royal Successors. They have always deserved the continuance of it,

it, for they have chearfully given the supplies and assistance required from them, besides the yearly tithes of their lands; and the *Minorquins* have never made any complaints but on extraordinary occasions, and it is hoped that at this time they will not fail of obtaining the desired redress of their grievances.

The military officers are much honoured, and well paid for their services, and therefore they are under just obligations upon any emergency, to exert themselves to the utmost of their power for the preservation of the island: But the natives have always given their assistance without any pay, and have shewn their love and attachment to the *British* crown; but notwithstanding their good behaviour, it may be said that they are really treated like slaves under the present Commander. And it is not to be doubted but his Majesty's subjects the *Minorquins* will obtain relief from a Prince, whose great desire and

and endeavour is to preserve the happiness of the meanest of his subjects.

There have been above twenty different *English* commanding officers in *Minorca* for these fifty-four years past: They were all acceptable to the people except three of them. Complaints were made against Mr. *Anstruther* to the King and Council, and he was found guilty of the charges laid against him, and was therefore condemned to refund the monies by him misapplied. The complaints against Mr. *Blakeney* were not brought to a conclusion on account of the *French* invasion of the island. Mr. *Johnston* is the third governor against whom complaints have been made: And it is thought that he hath exercised his severities even beyond the other two, and it will appear that the complaints against him are well grounded: Though he may be a good officer, he has proved a bad governor.

F I N I S.



